The goal of truth in public controversies is better advanced by public discourse than by litigation. A recent lawsuit against JAMA *stemmed from the plaintiffs' strong disagreement with statements published in* JAMA *relating to the assassination of John F. Kennedy (*JAMA. *1992;267:2794-2807;* JAMA. *1992;268:1686, 1736-1738, 1748-1754, 1681-1685;* JAMA. *1993;269:1507, 1540-1547, 1552-1553). In an effort to restore that dispute to its appropriate forum and conclude what* JAMA *viewed as an unwise use of resources—both the AMA's and the court's—that lawsuit was settled by, among other things,* JAMA*'s agreement to publish the following commentary and reply.*—ED.

Commentary on JFK Autopsy Articles

Charles A. Crenshaw, MD, J. Gary Shaw

In April 1992, the book *JFK: Conspiracy of Silence* was published, describing my eyewitness observations of the events at Parkland Hospital in Dallas, during that tragic weekend in November 1963. As documented by sworn testimony to the Warren Commission in 1964, as well as newspaper accounts in November 1963, I served on the Parkland Trauma Team that strove to save President Kennedy's life. Two days later, I served on the team that tried to save Oswald's life. My book's descriptions of President Kennedy's wounds were consistent with descriptions of the wounds that were provided to the Warren Commission in contemporaneous reports and testimony by other Parkland medical personnel. Nevertheless, *JAMA* attacked me without even attempting to interview me or giving me an opportunity to respond. The *JAMA* articles were obviously not written by a physician, and despite the description of the articles as peer reviewed, neither the author nor any reviewer was an acknowledged expert on the subject, nor were the articles submitted for outside peer review. These inadequacies contributed to the most glaring *JAMA* error—the false suggestion that I was not even in Trauma Room 1 at the time—a suggestion refuted by the Warren Commission testimony of five Parkland witnesses, two of whom were interviewed by *JAMA*. *JAMA* also failed to mention the existence of evidence supporting a call to Parkland's emergency room two days later from someone claiming to be President Johnson who requested a deathbed confession from Mr Oswald. Furthermore, although derogatory statements were made about me at a press conference where the AMA seal was prominently displayed for the media, neither the statements made at the press conference, nor the *JAMA* article being promoted, were endorsed by the AMA.

I thereafter submitted a 6800-word article* in rebuttal to *JAMA*'s 11 000-word article, but publication in *JAMA* was not made. Additionally, no correction has been published in *JAMA*, although *JAMA*'s errors were immediately noted in *The New York Times*. With no other recourse, a defamation suit was filed on behalf of me and my coauthor, Gary Shaw. After more than 1½ years of litigation, a settlement was reached, part of which requires *JAMA* to publish this response. The following reflects a letter that I sent to *JAMA* over two years ago, but which *JAMA* did not publish.

> To the Editor of *JAMA*: I continue to be amazed and disgusted by *JAMA*'s biased and unfair coverage of issues pertaining to the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. It is probably unprecedented for an allegedly scientific and professional journal to treat such a controversial subject in such an unscientific and unprofessional way. It is little wonder that the overwhelming majority of Americans disbelieve the single assassin theory that *JAMA* has tried so hard to sell. If that were not enough, Dr Lundberg and Mr Breo went further to defame me and to attack my book, *JFK: Conspiracy of Silence*, which is based upon my professional observations at Parkland Hospital on the tragic weekend of November 22, 1963. Dr Lundberg and Mr Breo, I *was* there, and I *did* see a small wound in President Kennedy's throat that was consistent with an entrance wound and a large hole in the back of President Kennedy's head that was consistent with an exit wound. Additionally, my observations are perfectly consistent with the statements of medical personnel at Parkland immediately after the assassination and the sworn testimony presented to the Warren Commission. In fact, not one single person—from Mrs Kennedy to the Dallas doctors and nurses (27 people at last count)—saw the wounds as described in the *JAMA* article. Thus, what I have said is nothing new; rather, what is new is that I went public with the facts (not theories) about what I saw almost thirty years ago.
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> Without ever having talked with me, Dr Lundberg pronounced my book "... a sad fabrication based upon unsubstantiated allegations." In contrast, he declared the *JAMA* article to be "... scientifically sound," furnishing "... the definitive history of what happened," and providing "... irrefutable proof that President Kennedy was killed by two bullets that struck him from above and behind." The record, however, is otherwise. If the recent misuse and abuse of *JAMA* to present an unscientific and unobjective view of the JFK case were not so harmful, it would merely be sad and unfortunate; but it has gone beyond that. What's worse, *JAMA* has refused to apologize or retract anything that has been said; or to attempt to be balanced or even to minimize the damage already done by publishing rebuttal articles, including one that I submitted. Rather, the *JAMA* critics and I have been limited to a few 500-word letters to the Editor, like this, which obviously cannot adequately address all of the inaccuracies contained in the prior articles and the misimpressions caused thereby.
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> I stand ready to provide the public with a complete and detailed rebuttal (with citations) to each of *JAMA*'s inaccurate and defamatory remarks about me and my book, an opportunity denied me by this forum.

When I stood over President Kennedy in Parkland's emergency room thirty-one years ago, it was my medical opinion that he had been shot from the front—that the throat wound was an entrance wound and the wound in the rear of the head was an exit wound. This is what I reported in my book, and it remains my belief today.

*My original article that *JAMA* refused to publish is scheduled to be published in 1995 by Open Archives Press, James Fetzer, editor, along with papers submitted by critics of *JAMA*'s coverage of the JFK assassination.